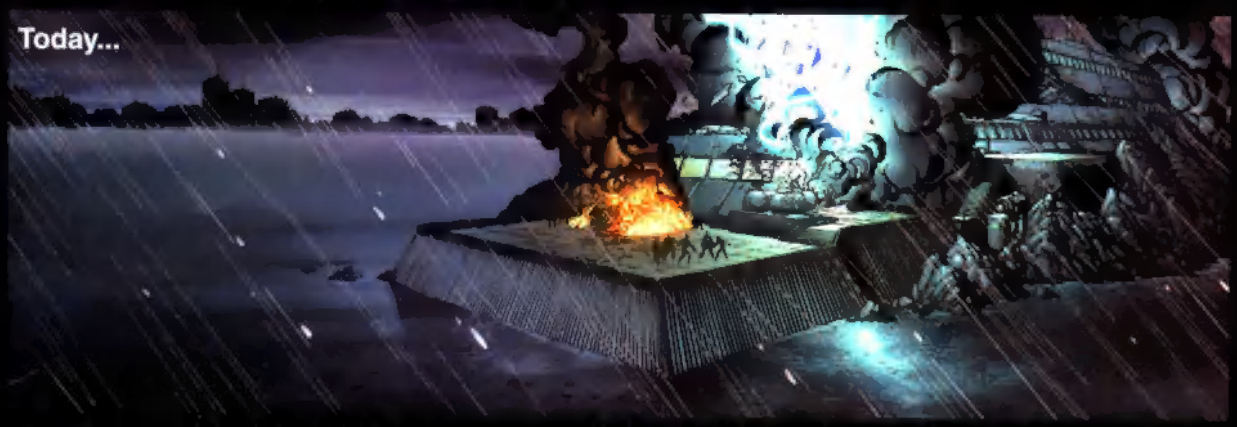
It was the worst day in Avengers' history. The Scarlet Witch suffered a total nervous breakdown after losing control of her reality-altering powers. In the chaos created around the breakdown, many of the other Avengers were killed or hurt, both emotionally and physically. Without funding to keep going, the rest of the team quietly disbanded.



The criminal Electro is hired to infiltrate the high-tech maximum-security prison known as the Raft. He sucks all the power out of Manhattan and overloads the entire island security system, setting free eighty-seven of the most dangerous and powerful criminals on Earth. Who hired Electro to do this and who he helped escape is a mystery.

Trapped on the prison island are S.H.I.E.L.D. Agent Jessica Drew (a.k.a. Spider-Woman), blind lawyer Matt Murdock (a.k.a. Daredevil), Murdock's partner Foggy Nelson, and Luke Cage, Hero for Hire. They have come to see the most powerful super hero in the world, the Sentry, who is rotting in a solitary basement cell because he killed his wife.

When the city goes black, Captain America is already in a black ops S.H.I.E.L.D. copter, headed toward the island. He does not realize that Spider-Man has also hitched a ride. They are joined by the invincible Iron Man, and the battle seems to be going the heroes' way until the Purple Man, with his mind-controlling powers, confronts his old enemy Luke Cage...

BREAKOUT! PART THREE

Writer: Brian Michael Bendis

Penciler: David Finch

Inker: Danny Miki with Allen Martinez & Victor Olazaba

Colorist: Frank D'Armata

Letterers: Richard Starkings & Comicraft's Albert Deschesne

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NYC PDA
PS 108
YO, MR. PARKER. HAVE A GOOD ONE!
SUCH A SUCK UP!
SHUT UP!
OW, OW AND OW.
MR. PARKER.
NO WAY.
HOW'S THE ARM?
IT HURTS A LOT. HOW DID YOU FIND ME, CAP?
YOU HAVE A S.H.I.E.L.D. FILE.
UGH!
AND YOU LOST YOUR MASK IN THE FIGHT.
DON'T REMIND ME. THANK GOD FOR MY AVERAGE LOOKS.
YOU DIDN'T TAKE THE DAY OFF? YOU WENT RIGHT FROM LAST NIGHT TO WORK?
KIDS NEED A TEACHER.
EVEN ONE HALLUCINATING FROM PAIN AND SLEEP DEPRIVATION.
AM I IN TROUBLE?
WHY WOULD YOU BE IN TROUBLE?
AM I?
NO.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
CAME TO MAKE YOU AN OFFER.
LAST NIGHT WAS VERY INSPIRING, BUT AT THE SAME TIME IT CREATED A DIRE SITUATION.
WE HAVE A LOT OF WORK TO DO.
SO WE'RE PUTTING A NEW AVENGERS TEAM TOGETHER.
I WANT YOU.

AVENGERS ASSEMBLE!

Before we kick off this installment of "Avengers Assemble," I'd like to take two seconds to acknowledge that the comics industry lost its grandfather this past week as of this writing. Will Eisner died on January 3, 2005. For those of you who don't know his work, next time you're in your local comic shop, treat yourself to his original graphic novel, *Minor Miracles* or his first volume of *The Spirit*, potentially THE MOST INFLUENTIAL strip in all of comics history. These were genius at the time of their printing, and there isn't a single writer or artist working in comics today who hasn't been influenced by Will's gifts to the craft.

And now, on to your letters. We've been swamped by fan mail in the two days since NEW AVENGERS #2 hit the stands, and it's still piling up. Here's a healthy first dose…

NEW AVENGERS,

I just got through reading issue #2 of the NEW AVENGERS, and I hate to bite off the McDonald's commercial, but…I'm Lovin' It! The artwork is great, naw, scratch that, the artwork is awesome, it's some of the best I have seen in a long time, and the story is the !#*$&*! Bendis, Finch, Milki, D'Armata, y'all some bad boys, for real! I am a firm believer that I should not have to sacrifice story for art, or art for story. In the NEW AVENGERS, I have found both! I read the letters page of "Avengers Assembled" and there are a lot of people hatin' on "Avengers Disassembled" and this new piece of cool y'all call the NEW AVENGERS. Those guys have got to quit drinking that Hatorade and eatin' nostalgia sandwiches!

I can understand them complaining if they want the same Gerber's baby food fed to them over and over again without any change in the taste, texture, or smell each month! I can understand their crying because they want their comics simple, with the good guys always winning and never losing! But this NEW AVENGERS ain't baby food, the NEW AVENGERS has grown up, and is now feeding its fans steak and potatoes! The characters are not new to the super hero biz, but a little new to the famed pages of THE AVENGERS. These heroes have evolved through their experiences, their wins, and, yes, their losses. For a long time I didn't read the "super heroes in tights" comics because there were no surprises and the heroes made it look easy. I bet nobody reading issue #2 of the NEW AVENGERS would have thought they'd see Spidey get that arm broke by Jigsaw! Oh my god, that was the !@#$*! But true to form, Spidey fought through the pain, and kept going. That's why we love him! Ain't nothin' comin' easy in the pages of the NEW AVENGERS and that's great! This new style ain't no sippin' tea! You have to guzzle this cup of Kool-Aid, and let it burn as it goes down. It's good stuff!

I realize after reading some of the comments by others that they feel let down and may not read AVENGERS anymore. Well, so sad, so sorry, see ya! Bendis and crew, you may lose a couple of fans, but if you guys refuse to bend to the crocodile tears of those who wish to hold back the greatness I have read and seen so far in the NEW AVENGERS and you continue to produce the same style of artwork and writing on each page, then don't worry, you picked up a new fan, and I'm sure there are many more out there that are tasting the AVENGERS again for the first time like a bowl of Kellogg's Cornflakes and totally lovin' IT!

Make mine Marvel and the NEW AVENGERS!

Chad Jones
Aurora, CO

Okay, that was WAY too enthusiastic not to print. Thanks for chiming in, Chad, and I've already contacted McDonald's headquarters. Your check should be arriving soon.

Dear Avengers Crew,

I've just read NEW AVENGERS #2, and in particular, the letters page. Seems the changes you all have made have quite a few people upset, and I just wanted to add my two cents. I am new to the series, in fact issue #500 of the AVENGERS was the first I've read, and only because the guy at the comics store insisted I get it. Perhaps it's because I had no preconceived notions of these characters' relationships, but I found the epic story fascinating and was instantly hooked. Emotional and beautifully told, if perhaps a bit disjointed. So many seem to be complaining about the way it ended, but I think it's good to shake things up once in a while to keep things fresh and interesting. Certainly after 500 issues that's going to be hard to do! But I applaud your bravery and confidence, and I think all the dissapointment is going to fade in light of the first NEW AVENGERS story. Talk about an entrance! Issues #1 and #2 have both left me gasping for breath! Wow. The new issue can't possibly come fast enough—seeing how this great new team unfolds will be a joy. Great, great work, guys. You've earned a loyal reader.

Zina Brown
Brooklyn, NY

Now this is more like it!

Greetings, Marvel,

Of all the years collecting comics, I've never felt the need to write a letter until now. I just finished NEW AVENGERS #2 and I think it's probably the finest single issue super hero comic I have ever read. Giving Mr. Bendis this series was a paramount idea in a "House of Ideas." I hope that this will give some of the fans with negative feelings about recent changes in the AVENGERS an excuse to look into other great titles that they might have previously overlooked. Specifically, ALIAS and THE PULSE because they have crucial information on characters like Luke Cage, the Purple Man, and their unfortunate connection. Keep up the great work and at this point if you publish Mr. Bendis' laundry list, I will buy it!

John Auble
Oceanside, CA

You know, John, it's usually my job to plug the other books. But you've clearly got a knack for it, so please don't forget that everyone should run out and pick up THE SENTRY trade paperback to find out his origin (and it's by Paul Jenkins and Jae Lee!) while supplies last. And to be as clear as possible, if you enjoy these characters and Bendis' writing, be sure to pick up SECRET WAR #s 1-3 (all currently on sale) for a look at many of these characters together for the first time! Luke Cage regularly appears in THE PULSE (on sale now!). And if you're old enough to purchase MAX titles, Jessica Drew a.k.a. Spider-Woman was last seen in the trade paperback ALIAS vol. 3 "THE UNDERNEATH" and Purple Man and Luke Cage's relationship is clearly defined in the final ALIAS trade paperback, ALIAS vol. 4 "THE SECRET ORIGIN OF JESSICA JONES" (both still available!). Okay, I'm totally shameless, I know, but if you're interested, there it is.

Dear AVENGERS ASSEMBLE:

When I read the editorial response to Raul S. Sanchez's letter, my jaw dropped. I've NEVER seen such a disrespectful response to a(n obviously) long-term fan. Could it be that the anger came because that fan's comment contained some truth to it? I myself was less than satisfied with the "Disassembled" storyline, which I found to be all steak and no sizzle (and seemingly forced, not character-driven), but was willing to give the new approach a chance. This callousness on the part of the editorial staff has caused me to rethink my open-mindedness. If you strongly disagree with the guy, don't print the letter. The response seriously lacked class, and put all readers on notice that they are disposable. We're all firmly aware now that Marvel, not the fans, owns the characters, and that they will be openly disrespected if they do not jump on board. Lots of good owning characters will do if all the fans jump ship. As I said, either ignore the letter or deal with it respectfully.

You have four months to print an apology to that reader; otherwise, I'm joining him out of disgust with editorial crassness.

Sean D. Memolo
(Via email)

Sean, if you look again, I took issue only with Raul's invoking Stan Lee and Jack Kirby (the two creators of the original AVENGERS in 1963, for those of you who don't know) to support his argument. I'm perfectly willing to accept and print letters that disagree with my own view and will continue to do so, and as it turns out, my comment about Stan being perfectly able to form his own opinion, while sarcastic, does seem validated…

Hey, Tom:

Just hadda tell you that I read the first two issues of NEW AVENGERS by Brian and David and they knocked my socks off. I really marvel (pun intended!) at the fact that Brian's writing gets better all the time. His imagination and willingness to come up with new and different themes is a never-ending source of reading pleasure. As for David, hey, great artwork is great artwork! What more needs to be said? Thanks to these two talented guys, and a certain editor with the initials TB, the story and new lineup of characters just crackles with sizzling energy and exciting possibilities. Marvel's willingness to take daring chances never fails to make me proud.

Excelsior!
Stan (eternal fan) Lee
POW! Entertainment

Stan, thanks very much for your note. And now that you're printed in an ACTUAL Marvel Comic, perhaps you too can grow up to be a comics writer someday. Hey, maybe next time you can even win a NO-PRIZE!

Dear Misters Bendis, Finch, Miki and the rest of Earth's Mightiest Comic Book Makers,

I can usually tell if a comic is good by the number of times I involuntarily yell out gibberish while reading it. Here are some of the things that came out of my mouth while reading New Avengers #2:

- Jigsaw snaps Spider-Man's arm: "OW!"
- Carnage appears from behind Foggy: "Yeeee…"
- The Sentry takes Carnage INTO FREAKIN' SPACE: "Awwwwwww-haw-haw-haw-haw!"
- Captain America does an involuntary 40-foot backflip out of a hole in the roof: "Whoaaaaaaah…"
- Purple Man brainscrews Luke Cage: "Ah? Ah? AH!"

These are the sounds of happiness. Don't listen to all the nay-sayers. NEW AVENGERS is slick, beautiful, exciting, and accessible to readers who are new to comics. Keep up the mighty good work.

Jared M. Logan
(Via email)

Don't forget, Jared:

- **Cap tears through a ton of baddies: "Shizzle!"**
- **Sentry appears: "Awwww YEAH!"**
- **And of course: To Be Continued… "Son of a—!"**

Dear BMB & Pals,

I just read the NEW AVENGERS #2 "Avengers Assemble!" in utter disbelief. I've been a loyal AVENGERS fan for 25 years. During this time, there have been many good issues, some great, and (as any longtime fan knows) TONS of mediocre or worse issues.

To all of you complainers out there, I defy you to point out one outstanding moment from Volume 1 after the trial and redemption of Hank Pym. You can't, which means that series floundered for the last 200+ issues.

And while Busiek and (especially) Pérez did an admirable job with Vol. 3, to me it just seemed like a well-executed rehash of previously explored themes.

Now, Mr. Bendis comes in, shakes everything up, and (gasp!) busts right out of the gate with a compelling story, in-depth characterization, and new (sometimes diametrically opposed) heroes. But are the old-guard fans excited? No, they're lighting torches because BMB isn't ending every AVENGERS issue with a group hug.

Believe me, I hated to see the demise of Hawkeye and (especially) Vision as much or more than the next person. But give me this new direction ANY DAY over the flatlining the AVENGERS franchise has been experiencing since the mid '80s.

For those fans who like superteams who are never in real danger, and who always get along, I encourage you to buy the old Superfriends cartoons on DVD. For myself, I'll be eagerly awaiting the next issue of New Avengers.

Shawn Whitley
Pensacola, FL

You're a tough critic, Shawn, so the fact that we're making you happy makes me happy. Thanks for reading.

Where to start?

I have been reading Marvel comics since I was 11 years old (I am now 49). I've basked in the greatness and suffered through the inane. I've laughed out loud, I've smiled. I've cried. Every time something I hated has happened there has been a little voice in the back of my head saying "Just hold on a little longer, Tom, things are bound to get better." And almost every time that has come to be true.

While I really hated the "Disassembled" story arc, with all of its unnecessary deaths, Wanda's breakdown, and Tony breaking up the team, the finale really did touch my heart. I found myself once again crying, as I have after the death of an old friend.

For all I can tell, the NEW AVENGERS is nothing but an excuse to copy another comics company's top team by adding in even more members who already have their own books. (And in one case, more than one book.) After reading the first two issues of the "New" AVENGERS, I have to ask myself why couldn't you have just let the team stay dead.

Of course, that same little voice is once again whispering to me…

Tom Reed
Tolono, IL

Listen to that voice, Tom, listen really closely.

Thanks to everyone for writing in. Now I've got a question that our last letter writer raised. Do YOU, the fans, think that NEW AVENGERS really is just like DC's flagship title? If so, why do you think that? If not, let me know how it's different. (And if you think NEW AVENGERS is too similar to the competitions's top title, wait'll you get a load of GLA #1, on sale in April!)

Thanks again to EVERYONE who has written in and IS STILL writing in! Keep 'em coming, and I'll keep doing these letters pages.

—Andy

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E-MAIL: MHEROES@MARVEL.COM
MARK E-MAIL "OKAY TO PRINT"

...WELCOME TO STARK TOWER.
I HAVE BEEN BUILDING THIS BUILDING--A GLEAMING BEACON OF MODERN ARCHITECTURE--FOR THE LAST FOUR YEARS.
ONE OF THE DREAM PROJECTS OF MY LIFE, AND HERE IT IS.
THE TOP THREE FLOORS HERE WERE GOING TO BE MY NEW HOME, BUT THEY'RE MY GIFT TO YOU.
THIS IS YOUR HOME IF YOU NEED IT. THIS IS WHERE WE WILL MEET. THIS IS WHERE WE WILL PLAN.
I WON'T LIE TO YOU, I'M NOT COMPLETELY SOLD ON THIS IDEA.
THIS NEW TEAM.
IT'S NOT AN *INSULT* TO ANY OF YOU, BUT AS YOU ARE ALL AWARE, THE *LAST* AVENGERS DIDN'T END WELL AND IT--WELL, IT'S STILL UNDER MY SKIN.
BUT I'VE LEARNED TO LISTEN TO CAPTAIN AMERICA'S GUT INSTINCTS.
AND IF HE WANTS THIS TEAM TO BE, THEN I WILL HELP ANY WAY I CAN.
OK!
FIRST LET'S TALK ABOUT WHAT HAPPENED LAST NIGHT.
UM, BEFORE YOU GET INTO THAT, I HAVE, LIKE, 76 QUESTIONS?
ACTUALLY...
YOU KNOW WHAT? JESSICA DREW ISN'T HERE YET.
WE SHOULD WAIT FOR HER.